

VERDICT LEAVES MURDER A MYSTERY

Mud Slinging Campaign Against Halls Collapses

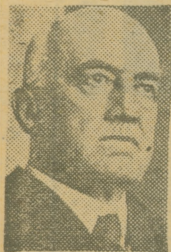
By LEO J. CASEY
GRAPHIC Staff Correspondent

SOMERVILLE, N. J., Dec. 4.—A blanket of virgin snow covered the valley of the Raritan today as Mrs. Frances Stevens Hall journeyed here to the bail hearing which would completely free her brothers and cousin from the cells they have occupied since their arrest for the murders of the Rev. Edward Wheeler Hall and Mrs. Eleanor Mills.

Pure, white snow—the first of the winter—spread over the golden brown of the Watchung Mountains! Pure, white snow, covering the dirt and the muck of the lowlands!

It seemed a symbol of the innocence of those who have been so long accused. And at the same time, only a thin coverlet to hide the muck and the dirt of those who accused them!

THE MOST SENSATIONAL MURDER TRIAL OF THE AGE ENDED LAST EVENING JUST AS THE GRAPHIC SAID IT WOULD MONTHS AGO—IN AN ACQUITTAL FOR THE GRAY-HAIRED



Justice Parker



Alex Simpson

WIDOW OF THE ERRING MINISTER AND HER TWO BROTHERS, WILLIE AND HENRY STEVENS.

Collapse of Vituperation

And with it collapsed the most sensational and vituperative campaign ever conducted by a newspaper—the New York Daily Mirror—which, for the purpose of increasing circulation, caused an innocent woman and three of her men folk to be arrested.

Despite the services of one of the most agile-brained lawyers in the East and the painstaking investigation of trained detectives, the famous Hall-Mills case is just where it was on September 16, four years ago, when the bodies of the rector and his choir singer were found under the withered crabapple tree of the old Phillips farm.

Who killed them in their illicit tryst, is unrevealed. The world does know, however, that the time has not yet arrived when a wealthy publisher, hungry for gain, can be sustained by a court of law in his nasty quest for publicity.

It was 6.41 o'clock last night when Mrs. Hall and her brothers were called from the jail to the prisoners' dock in the courtroom. The jury, which had been out nearly five hours, had reached a verdict!

The three defendants emerged smilingly from the underground passageway which led to the courtroom.

At 6.45 the black-robed justices took their seats, and Justice Parker, commenting on the importance of the case and public interest in it, warned against a demonstration.

The crowd, which had waited patiently in the close, stale air of the courtroom, leaned forward eagerly. Reporters moved to the exits, not satisfied for messengers

(Continued on Page 14)

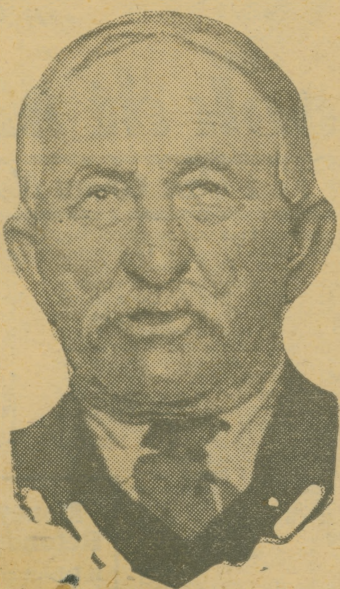
Graphic Cub Reporter Beats Nation



TEMPERAMENTAL Charlie Gregory will never forget the Hall-Mills trial. Sent there to assist the regular GRAPHIC staff in covering the developments of the case, he met Miss Lucy Locke Ferguson, promptly laid siege to her heart and won her in five days. Then, spurred by ambition as befits a benedict, he defied the guards at the court house when the verdict was announced, dashed out and gave the news to the telegrapher, thus enabling The GRAPHIC to scoop all its rivals. Photo shows Mr. and Mrs. Gregory.

Hall Juror Hits Hotel Man Who Made Bias Charges

After the conclusion of the Hall-Mills trial last night, John Young, one of the jurors, had it out with Gilbert Van Doren, 65-year-old proprietor of the Colonial House in Somerville, who had accused him of deciding prematurely to vote for an acquittal.



GILBERT VAN DOREN

Hall Trial Cost May Be \$1,000,000, It Is Estimated

SOMERVILLE, N. J., Dec. 4.—The Hall-Mills case eclipsed all criminal trials in the history of New Jersey. In point of volume of testimony taken during the four weeks and three days, it is believed to be without parallel in any state in recent years.

One million, one hundred and ten thousand words are in the record. These are spread on 5,500 pages.

A total of 178 witnesses testified.

The encounter took place in the Colonial House, where the jury had been quartered during the trial. Van Doren, in a letter to Supreme Court Justice Charles W. Parker, had accused Young and others of criticizing Assistant Attorney General Alexander Simpson and deciding to free the three defendants only two days after the trial started.

Van Doren Jibes at Juror

Young had returned to the Colonial House to pack his belongings before departing for home. The trial had been a strain and the juror was not ready to be faced with fresh accusations.

Van Doren was in the lobby when Young entered. The two men eyed each other belligerently for a moment. Then Van Doren drawled:—

"Well, you only did what I said you'd do."

Young, who is well built and just over 40 years of age, advanced but Van Doren stood his ground stubbornly.

"You're a liar," Young shouted and hit his elderly adversary in the face.

Van Doren made feeble efforts to fight back but his younger opponent was too much for him. They battled in the lobby until newspapermen separated them.

"Well, I showed him, anyway," Young muttered as he was led away.

Of these the state produced 102 and the defense 76.

The cost, as well as the salaries and expenses of the investigators, will be undertaken by Somerville county.

While it was denied that the cost would be large when the investigation opened, the total is now placed at \$1,000,000.

GRAPHIC Cub Reporter Scores Hall Case 'Beat'

The GRAPHIC beat the nation on the news of the verdict in the Hall-Mills trial because Charles E. Gregory, a cub reporter, forgot that he was a cub and was arrested for fighting his way out of the courtroom at Somerville, N. J., after the jury's decision was made known.

An extra edition of this newspaper carrying the report of the acquittal of Mrs. Frances Stevens Hall, Henry and Willie Stevens was on the street between fifteen and twenty minutes before any competitor. It was a victory for Gregory as well as The GRAPHIC.

Eager to Prove Mettle

The cub, youngest member of the staff at Somerville, had been married only a few weeks before and was anxious to prove his real worth. He is only 23.

During the trial he worked faithfully as an assistant to Leo J. Casey and Jack Miley, veteran reporters for this newspaper. Then the big day came. Clarence E. Case, counsel for the defense, finished his summation and Assistant Attorney General Alexander Simpson concluded for the state. Supreme Court Justice Charles W. Parker charged the jury, and the twelve men filed out of the courtroom to deliberate.

More than five hours later it was announced that the jury had reached a verdict. The telegraph instruments were in the basement.

His Big Chance Nears

This was the situation with which Gregory had to contend. He was instructed to station himself near the door and fight his way out the moment the decision was announced. In the basement, Miley was waiting to flash the news to The GRAPHIC.

Gregory crouched behind the rear row of seats as the jurors filed into the courtroom. Husky small-town guards ignored his whispered pleas to open the door a few inches so that he might crawl out when the verdict was announced. Gregory knew he would have to fight or lose his big chance.

There was a tense air in the courtroom as Foreman Frank Dunster arose solemnly. In the back row, Gregory waited grimly. "Henry Stevens not guilty!"

Fought Way Past Guards

It was an acquittal for all and the reporter, impatient to get out with the news, did not wait for the rest. He dashed for the door and rammed a big guard who shoved him back. Gregory ducked low and charged again and once more, he was repulsed. The court was rapping for order.

Gregory came on again. He fought his way past the guards to Miley, who was standing outside.

Battered, Hailed Before Court

"Acquittal, Jack!" Gregory shouted and Miley relayed the call to his telegraph operator in the basement before the 150 other newspapermen from every part of the country knew what had happened. They were all beaten cub reporter.

But that wasn't all. They arrested Gregory and dragged him before the judge's bench. The reporter's necktie and collar were torn from him. Ex-Sheriff Bogart T. Conklin assaulted him under protection of armed guards.

Defended by Fellow Reporter

From his seat in the first row of the press section, Casey protested heatedly to Justice Parker against the action of the police. He argued that Gregory had his duty to perform and was entitled to some consideration. Then he demanded Gregory's release and Justice Parker and County Judge Frank Cleary freed the reporter.

But The GRAPHIC long since was on the street giving first news to thousands that Mrs. Hall and her brothers were acquitted.

Verdict Ends Case Covering Period Of Over 4 Years

SOMERVILLE, N. J., Dec. 4 (By U. P.).—The most famous murder trial in this country in scores of years ended when the jury returned a verdict of "not guilty." But the mystery remains unsolved.

For more than four years northern New Jersey was stirred by the mystery of the murder of the Rev. Edward Wheeler Hall and his pretty choir singer, Mrs. Eleanor Mills, on a farm on the outskirts of New Brunswick.

It was the old tragedy of illicit love, with one of its victims being the rector of the fashionable St. John the Evangelist. Their affair was common gossip, but apparently neither the rector's wife nor the choir singer's husband, James



Rev. E. W. Hall



Eleanor Mills

Mills, sexton, was aware of their amour.

On the night of September 14, 1922, the rector and his inamorata left their homes never to return alive. Their bodies were found under a crabapple tree on the second morning. A bullet pierced the rector's brain; three bullets spelled death to Mrs. Mills. Her throat was cut. Only 61 cents were found in the rector's pockets. His gold watch was missing.

There was an investigation which failed to clear the mystery. About four years later—July 28 last—Mrs. Hall was arrested and released on \$15,000 bail.

State Senator Alexander W. Simpson was appointed as special prosecutor to handle the case. On August 12 last Mrs. Hall's brother, Willie Stevens, and her cousin, Henry de la Bruyere Carpenter, were arrested, charged with the murders. All were indicted for murder on September 15.

On November 3 all were placed on trial, the defendants maintaining their innocence.

Hall Chronology

The trial was marked by bitterness between the attorneys on both sides. The feature easily was the appearance in court on a stretcher of Mrs. Jane Gibson, known as the "pig woman." Seemingly near death, Mrs. Gibson said she saw Mrs. Hall, her brothers and Carpenter at or near the scene of the murder. It was a scene unequalled in the history of American jurisprudence. In all, eighty-four witnesses were called by the state.

The case of the defense was rested last Monday. Rebuttal witnesses and impassioned summations followed. Justice Charles Parker charged the jury, which then retired to deliberate whether the attempt of the sovereign state of New Jersey to solve the four-year-old murder had been successful.